

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.T., OCTOBER 27, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: October 27, 1976

Forwarded to:

Honorable Edwin W. Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana
P. O. Box 44004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-76-81 and P-76-82

At 1:05 p.m., on August 9, 1976, a road grader ruptured a looped, 20-inch, natural gas transmission line in Cartwright, Louisiana. Gas at 770 psig escaped in several directions from the line's two streams and ignited within seconds. The resulting flame engulfed the area, killed six residents, injured one person, and incinerated two houses, a house trailer, and several acres of land.

The Jackson Parish Police Jury (Jury) road grader was cleaning road drainage ditches on schoolbus routes before the opening of Parish schools when it struck the line crossing under Griffin Road. United Gas Pipe Line Company (United), operator of the line, had not been notified that the ditches would be cleaned.

The National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary investigation of this accident disclosed that the pipeline was constructed in 1949, before Federal regulation of the transportation of natural gas and before construction of Griffin Road. The pipeline was originally buried 36 inches below the surface; but during construction of the road in 1972, the pipe cover at the east drainage ditch was reduced by about 2 feet. United's aerial patrol observed this construction and United dispatched personnel to the site to assure protection of the pipe. Eight pipeline markers were installed over the 20-inch and 24-inch pipelines. Federal standards for newly constructed pipelines would require 36 inches of cover at the drainage ditch.

P-76-81 and P-76-82

Currently, United communicates with excavators only after a company patrol discovers activity near its pipelines. The State of Louisiana has neither a "one-call" notification system nor a law requiring notification of operators of underground facilities before excavating is begun.

A 1973 Safety Board study ^{1/} of damage prevention for underground facilities concluded that (1) the major effort for preventing such damage must come from the local level; (2) all concerned parties (excavators, operators of underground facilities, State and local officials) must work together; (3) regulations should require notification of proposed excavation and allow operators of underground systems to establish convenient methods for receiving notification; and (4) penalties for failing to comply with notification regulations should be adequate to deter potential violators.

The study pointed out that one of the most effective methods of providing notification of proposed excavation is a "one-call" system. This system provides one telephone number to be called by a person planning to excavate; all participating operators of underground facilities are then informed of the proposed excavation. Of course, this system is most effective when all operators of underground facilities use the system. The number of one-call systems in use has increased rapidly in recent years; today there are 82 systems operating in 34 States, including many statewide systems.

A one-call notification system is being formed in the Baton Rouge area and hopefully will begin operation later this year. Two expansions are planned so that the north, northwest, and central portions of the State will have a one-call system. Southern Louisiana also plans to have its own notification system. Implementation and maximum use of these planned systems will greatly enhance the safety of the public in Louisiana since many rural roads, like Griffin Road, are constructed and maintained without determining the location of underground facilities or considering the effect of excavation or earth-moving activities on these facilities.

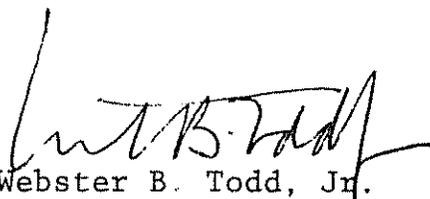
1/ National Transportation Safety Board Special Study, Report No. NTSB-PSS-73-1.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Governor of the State of Louisiana:

Encourage the implementation of the proposed Louisiana "one-call" notification systems to provide statewide coverage. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-81)

Advise all State and Parish agencies about the circumstances of this accident and urge that they notify operators of pipeline and other underground facilities before excavating near these facilities. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-82)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations. BAILEY, Vice Chairman, did not participate.


By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.